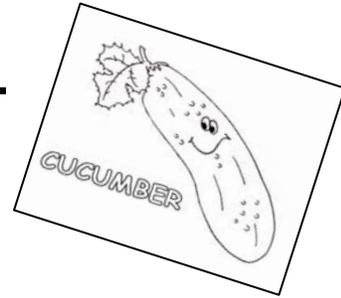


# Cucumbers

## Fact Sheet

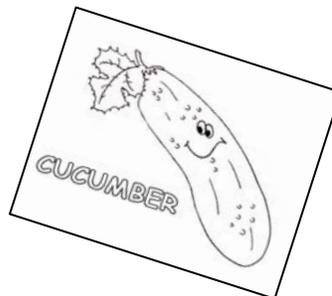


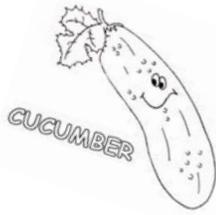
### **Where did they come from?**

Cucumbers have been cultivated for over 3,000 years and may be one of the oldest crops ever grown. Cucumbers originated in India where they spread through Greece and Italy. By 1539 cucumbers were grown in Florida by the natives and by 1584 they were grown in Virginia. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century cucumbers were being produced throughout North America. Today, cucumbers are grown all over the world and are eaten as a fresh raw vegetable or they are used for pickling.

### **Where do they grow?**

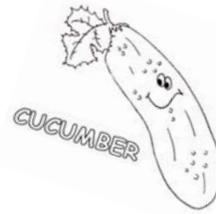
Cucumbers are grown in all states throughout the country but the majority of the cucumbers produced come from Florida. The major states that grow cucumbers that are sold fresh are Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York and California. Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Texas are major states that produce processing cucumbers those which are used primarily for pickling. During the fall and winter months cucumbers are imported from Mexico into the United States and, therefore, they are available to us all year long. The best months to purchase cucumbers are May through July.





# Cucumbers

## Fact Sheet



### **How do they grow?**

Cucumbers are produced by seeds, which are directly planted into the soil. The stems of the cucumber plants develop into vines, which can be trained on trellises to save space and improve their yield and quality. Cucumber plants have moderately deep roots. Cucumbers grow best in warm temperatures and require good irrigation, weed control, disease and insect management.

Two types of cucumbers are grown, those used to be eaten as a fresh, raw vegetable and those used to make pickles. Pickling cucumbers are usually smaller and fatter with bumpy, lighter green colored skins. The skins of cucumbers eaten raw are often waxed after they are picked, as this prevents them from going bad quickly. “Cukes”, as they are commonly called, grow in a variety of sizes from the 1 inch gherkin which is usually pickled, to ones that are 20 inches or longer. The varieties that are used for eating raw are usually 6 to 9 inches long.

Today, many cucumbers are grown in greenhouses. Most of these are slender with a thin, smooth skin and are seedless, or contain very small seeds. They are usually 1 to 2 feet long and are also milder in flavor. These are often called “burpless cucumbers” or “English cucumbers” and are easier to digest.

### **Are they healthy?**

- 👉 Good source of iron, calcium, vitamin A and C
- 👉 Contain carbohydrates, protein and dietary fiber

### **How do you pick a good one?**

- 👉 Choose ones that are very firm with rounded ends
- 👉 The skin should be a rich green color (*“Kirby” and “burpless” varieties are lighter in color*)
- 👉 Avoid those that are withered, shriveled or contain soft spots
- 👉 Choose slender cucumbers as they usually have less seeds

# 😊 FUN FACTS! 😊

## Cucumbers

### Did you know...

- 😊 **Did you know cucumbers are 95% water?**
- 😊 **Did you know the inner temperature of a cucumber can be 20° degrees cooler than the outside air?**  
(This is how we got the catchy phrase “Cool as a Cucumber”!)
- 😊 **Did you know cucumbers are cool and moist due to their water content?**
- 😊 **Did you know there are many varieties of cucumbers?**  
(English, Persian, Pickling, Armenian and Japanese)
- 😊 **Did you know cucumbers are a member of the gourd family along with pumpkins, zucchini, watermelon and squash?**
- 😊 **Did you know some cucumbers are called “burpless”?**  
(These cucumbers have no seeds or tiny seeds which make this variety easier for people to digest.)
- 😊 **Did you know the “kirby” cucumber, used to make dill pickles, is also a popular raw cuke?**  
(The “kirby” is popular as a fresh cucumber because it has a thin skin with a crisp flesh or inside and tiny seeds. Its skin is also not waxed!)
- 😊 **Did you know an average sized cucumber has only 15 calories?**
- 😊 **Did you know there are two types of cucumbers; slicers and picklers?**  
(“Slicers” are eaten raw or fresh and “picklers” are used to make pickles.)

**Remember ...**

**Include 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day!**



## School Food Service Link.....

Quick Steps to 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day at school...

Listed below are suggestions that you may choose at your own discretion

### RECIPES:

- ✓ Try a new recipe with cucumbers ---  
Cucumber Sauce (USDA G-13); This is a Grecian sauce called "Ttatziki" and is used as a topping for Greek gyros (USDA F-09). Also use to top baked potatoes or as a dressing for Greek salads.
- ✓ Try a quick cucumber sauce! Add 1 lb. 10 oz. of grated cucumbers to 3 cups of prepared Ranch dressing. This makes a great raw vegetable dip or use as a topping for sandwiches and wraps.
- ✓ Add cucumber slices to fresh, tossed salads
- ✓ Prepare a cucumber salad with a twist of flavor!  
Slice cucumbers and onions up very thin.  
Mix with ranch dressing. Serve on your salad bar, as a side vegetable or as a garnish with cold sandwiches or prepackaged salads.
- ✓ Add cucumber sauce to baked or grilled chicken
- ✓ Offer cucumber slices/sticks and carrot circles/sticks with vegetable dip; Vary color and shape for added eye appeal!

### MARKETING:

- ✓ Advertise and highlight the fruit or vegetable of the month on your menu
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) page 9

### PROMOTIONS:

- ✓ Promote a "Sticker Day" with prizes on featured fruit/vegetable menu day;  
Give this menu a special name (*Example: Cuky for Cucumbers! Chill Out with Cukes! Cucumber Craze!*)
- ✓ Feature a week filled with cukes! Offer cucumbers in an assortment of recipes.  
Offer a different one for each day of the week!
- ✓ Feature "Green Day" on the day that you offer cucumbers on your menu
  - ✓ Encourage the entire school to get involved
  - ✓ Reward students with a small prize if they are wearing green
- ✓ Turn your salad bar into a self-serve fruit and vegetable bar once/week or once/month
  - ✓ Select produce in season
  - ✓ Utilize commodity frozen and canned fruits and vegetables and dried fruits
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) pages 16-31

#### **Presentation**

#### **Meal Appeal -----**

Add a Decorative Touch  
Run Tines of a Fork Down  
Entire Length of Cucumber,  
Penetrating the Skin.  
Slice into Circles.

#### **Quality:**

Refrigerate Cucumbers---  
Do Not Overchill  
as this will Make the  
Inside of the Cucumber  
Mushy!

#### **Safety:**

Wash the Outside of All  
Fresh Produce  
Before Use!